

-As delivered-

**Statement of Rules Committee Chairwoman Amy Klobuchar
Oversight of Library of Congress Modernization Efforts
October 20, 2021**

Good afternoon. I call this hearing of the Rules and Administration Committee on oversight of the Library of Congress's modernization efforts in order. And I would like to thank Ranking Member Blunt, our colleagues, and our witnesses for being here, in what we will consider an island of sanity on a rather insane day today. Right here in this room, we're going to be constructive, as you always are, and I want to thank you for the work you've all done on behalf of our nation's library.

In particular, I'd like to thank Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden for once again appearing before the Committee and for maintaining a steady hand at the Library through a really difficult time -- the pandemic. A place where so many people are used to coming in in-person and walking through the doors, like every other agency and every other business. It's been not easy. I'd also like to welcome our other witnesses. Ms. Shira Perlmutter, who is the Register of Copyrights and Director of the U.S. Copyright Office; Ms. Mary Mazanec, who is the Director of the Congressional Research Service, something we all use; and Mr. Jason Broughton, who is the Director of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, who just joined the Library last month -- after previously serving as Vermont's first African American State Librarian -- so congratulations on your new position.

As some of you know, I know that Dr. Haden knows it, it was my childhood dream to be a librarian. It's what I put down in first grade of what I wanted to do, I started my own Dewey Decimal System in a box of all the books that I read. My career, sadly, took a different path, but this is still very important to me. And the reason I wanted to be a librarian is it was my favorite thing to go to the library and check out books and read them.

Libraries are an essential part of our civic infrastructure, holding society's important records, critical research, and works of art. They preserve and share this knowledge for future generations.

We're here today to discuss the ongoing efforts to modernize the largest library in the world, the Library of Congress. Okay, I just learned that as I read it, that we do in fact have the largest library in the world. The Library holds more than 171 million volumes and has the world's largest collections of legal materials, films, and sound recordings.

People come from all over the world to see these collections, even in the midst of the pandemic. Last year, the Library welcomed more than half a million visitors in person and increased its online traffic by more than 50 percent -- to nearly 175 million unique visits.

Thousands of dedicated staff at the Library work to ensure that these important resources are available to the public. My own husband has written a number of historical books and spent much time in the Library of Congress researching. The initiatives, Dr. Hayden, that you have

-As delivered-

launched and the reforms you have implemented speak to your vision of a Library that is inclusive and accessible to everyone.

The stated goal of the Library's five-year strategic plan released in 2018 -- Enriching the Library Experience -- is to expand the Library's intellectual and inspirational value to people across the country, and to engage and inform all Americans from all walks of life.

When we held our last oversight hearing on Library modernization in 2019, you Dr. Hayden explained that in order to achieve these goals and increase accessibility, you had begun a modernization effort to ensure that the Library keeps pace with the rapid advancement of technology. I note that this was in November, right before the onslaught of the pandemic, so it's good you had a plan.

Digital access and connectivity to the Library's collections have proved, as I've noted, especially during the pandemic, investments in the Library's information technology systems and programs are essential for the Library to fulfill its mission.

Briefly, the copyright office -- the Library of Congress is home, of course, to the Copyright Office, critical to our economy. According to a study released last year, businesses and artists who rely on copyrights contribute more than \$1.5 trillion to our economy annually -- that translates to about 7 percent of the total U.S. G-D-P and 5.7 million jobs.

If you're an author, musician, filmmaker, or any one of the millions of Americans who create content, the Copyright Office is the place for you to go.

Copyrights are essential to the vitality and creativity of our economy, and modernizing the Office to keep pace with the technology and content is a priority for our nation and we look forward to hearing those updates as well as the implementation of legislation that has passed in recent years including the Music Modernization Act and the CASE Act.

Congressional Research Service for members and our staff, very important, 75,000 congressional requests in the year 2020.

CRS informs Congress on many of the most pressing legislative issues facing our nation, providing non-partisan analysis that informs the policy-making process.

Finally, last but not least, the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled performs the critical role of ensuring that the Library's resources are available to everyone. Ensuring that those who cannot read print have access to modern braille devices, that continues to be one of Senator Blunt's and I top priorities.

Today we're going to hear more about NLS's several ongoing efforts to expand access to its services, including by providing braille eReaders and with its growing library of nearly 150,000 downloadable braille and audio reading materials.

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The Library has a rich and celebrated history, and we look forward to hearing about the modernization efforts at this critical time.

With that, I turn it over to my friend -- real friend and colleague -- Senator Blunt.

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